



MARGARET RORKE, an attorney, wife, and mother (not necessarily in that order), has spent her lifetime in Saginaw, Michigan. Like the true Michigander she is, she traveled downstate to earn her B.A. and J.D. degrees at the University of Michigan. In addition to being a member of the Michigan Bar, she belongs to the First Congregational Church, P.E.O., Alpha Chi Omega, Woman's National Farm and Garden Association, and served two terms as president of the Saginaw Zonta Club. So imbued is she with an awareness of the solid values gleaned from communal life in her hometown, she has designated any returns from her book be contributed to the religious, cultural, and charitable interests of Saginaw.

Mrs. Rorke wrote verse for the *Saginaw News* editorial page for twenty-two years, and her poems have made numerous appearances with Judd Arnett of the *Detroit Free Press*, as well as in women's magazines and trade journals.

RORKE

My Ego Trip

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MARGARET RORKE

EXPOSITION



My Ego Trip

by

Margaret Rorke



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I WANT TO THANK:

God—for the privilege of pushing His pen.

Bill, my husband and critic—for his
patience and interest in my pet project.

Bob and Peggy, our children—for those
contributions that only children
can make.

And our friends who, by their encouragement,
have inspired this collection.

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The title is the half apology with which I offer this volume. It would be bold of me to feel that you are eager to travel through my experiences and thoughts. But, at times, I have gone with apprehension to see a friend's slides and hear a monologue on his trip . . . and then discovered I really enjoyed it.

May you have similar luck with MY EGO TRIP!

Sincerely,
Margaret Rorke

All Aboard!

Our life is like a trip by train.

From birth the journey starts
And goes along the track of years
Into uncharted parts.

At night we sleep quite unaware
That we are moving still;
But with the light we can perceive
The valley and the hill.

We pause at stations on the way
To load applause and scars.
Achievement, knowledge and defeat
Fill up the baggage cars.
The depots seem important as
Divisions of the ride,
But when they're past a mile or two,
Just mem'ries they provide.

The nicest part is meeting folks
Who chance to board our train.
They may not travel far with us,
Still from them we obtain
The love that warms, the joys that cheer,
The bitter blows that sting,
Encouragement and scheming hate—
In fact, just everything!

Weddings

"Dearly beloved, we're gathered today"
These are the words that most ministers say
Starting the ritual setting for life
All of the duties of husband and wife.


Full in the presence of witnesses met,
Facing the altar there stands a duet,
Pledging and promising marital vows,
Firm in the faith that the Maker endows.


This is a moment so awesome and tense,
Solemn and stirring, yet stilled with suspense.
Two single souls by the syllables said
Blend into one as they ask to be wed.

Love lights the church, though the candles pretend.
Love warms the heart of each kinfolk and friend.
Love forms the prayer in the pastor's best prose.
Love seals the kiss, as the bargain they close.

Weddings are mainly for bridegroom and bride,
Yet for the guests they do something inside,
Something so magic, they're carried away.
"All of the world loves a lover," they say.

Bill on "Weddings"

"Weddings," says Bill, are a female affair, 
Rites that the menfolk in agony share.
Watch the poor ushers with stiff-legged gait
March in a manner by fear made sedate.

"Notice the bridesmaids just floating along,
Gliding with ease of the words to a song. 
Then comes the bride in a radiant glow,
Proud of her conquest, she wants you to know.

"Father whose arm she so gracefully takes
Looks as though something internally aches.
Awkward each step he deposits too soon.
He feels akin to a dressed-up baboon.

"Down at the end of the carpeted aisle
Quakes the poor groom with a quivering smile,
Backed by a best man who feels at his worst
Fing 'ring the ring with which he's been accurst.

"Weak as the sex is reputed to be,
Guests who are women are stretching to see.
Males at their sides seem to slink in their seats.
'Man never profits though hist'ry repeats.!' "

Abundance

The abundance of the season,
With its store of winter food,
Was the underlying reason
For the Pilgrims' grateful mood.
By our standards it was meager,
By our plenty it was bare;
But that little band was eager
To thank Him who'd put it there.

With abundance we're surrounded,
We have endless sky and sea.
By no limits are we bounded
But the wills of you and me.
There is friendship . . . there is beauty,
There is courage, faith and hope.
These impose no mortal duty . . .
They are infinite in scope.

For abundance found in living,
For the very gift of life,
Let us voice on this Thanksgiving,
Above the stridency of strife,
Our sincere appreciation
Unto Him to Whom it's due;
So He'll know His favored nation
Has a heart abundant too.

After Thirty Years

I start to speak, and he'll conclude
The sentence I would say.
This doesn't start a fam'ly feud.
It's just our dual way
Of getting little thoughts expressed.
Such unity appears
And blooms at just about its best
When wed for thirty years.

When we are trav'ling near or far
And sitting side by side,
We mutually will drive the car,
Though only one can guide
The wheel, the pedal, and the brake
And rightly shift the gears.
Beyond such trifles, two partake
When wed for thirty years.

The foods on which we disagreed
When first we pledged our vow,
We've compromised until we need
A common diet now.
In politics we see as one
And share like hopes and fears.
Folks cheer and boo in unison
When wed for thirty years.

And I can even wear his "specks,"
When I can't find my own,
To magnify those little flecks
Of numbers when I phone.
Perhaps in this there lies the clue:
A dimming sight appears
To blot each other's faults from view
When wed for thirty years.

To the Ages

All the soldiers and the sages—
Men whom history had ranked
As belonging to The Ages—
Were around a table flanked.
From each era and each nation
All these mighty men were met
For the grand initiation
Of a novice had been set.

Caesar sat with Alexander.
Shakespeare talked a bit with Bach.
Plato spoke with utmost candor
While Saint Peter watched the clock,
For 'twas he whom they'd selected
To receive the honored guest
Whom The Ages had elected
As a man who'd met their test.

"To The Ages," called Saint Peter,
As Abe Lincoln joined the throng,
"To most men no prize is sweeter.
To The Ages you belong!
Few arrive within these portals.
Fewer honestly recall
Lives with malice toward no mortals
'But with charity for all.' "

Abe was humble as he entered
And received the group's applause.
All attention on him centered.
Even breathing seemed to pause.
Then Saint Peter said, "We've waited
For a story. Are you set?"
And to Abe, it has been stated,
All The Ages listen yet.

An Angel

Did you ever make an angel?
First lie flat upon the snow,
Arms at sides and feet together.
Spread your feet apart—just so.
Then bring finger tips together
Reaching high above your head.
Getting up, you'll think an angel
Had been lying there instead.

When I found a perfect "angel"
In the snow outside our door,
Then beheld a brownish snowsuit
(I had often seen before)
With its back completely coated
By a covering of white;
Two and two still made a total
I was positive was right.

But the lad who'd made the angel
Sweetly placid in the snow
Had been fighting with companions
Not so very long ago;
So I've come to this conclusion
That I ask you to receive:
One can't always tell an angel
From impressions he may leave.

Are You List'ning?

While I'm talking, he is reading
In his fav'rite easy chair,
And I'm pretty sure he doesn't
Ever know that I am there.
I have made a big discov'ry,
And a gag won't keep me still;
So I call to rouse him slightly,
"Are you list'ning to me, Bill?"

Not a twitch or facial motion
Even shows that he's alive,
And I feel the news I'm telling
Not a moment will survive,
For, in truth, I might forget it;
So I shout in accents shrill
To demand his full attention,
"Are you list'ning to me, Bill?"

I object to telling over
What already I have told.
I dislike to be rejected
Like a piece of toast that's cold—
But the thing that really gets me:
When my patience is a thread,
He will look up and re-echo
Every word that I have said.

Au Gratin

I don't think I'm underhanded
Since the day when I was wed.
It is just my Bill was landed
With fudge cake and gingerbread.
I was lucky—never guessing
Of all bait I'd chosen these
Which he'd eat without the blessing
Of a covering of cheese.

Now I've taken to disguising
Lots of vegetables and meat
In attempts quite enterprising
To entice his Nibs to eat.
When with allergies he's fencing
'Gainst some food, (He'll even sneeze)
That's the clue for my commencing
To just cover it with cheese.

I suppose my wifely sisters
All have methods of their own.
Some use catsup on their misters.
Some make sauces—theirs alone.
But I have this one suggestion
If your hubby's hard to please.
Let me put it as a question:
Have you covered it with cheese?

The Bake Sale

Come, children, see your breakfast plate,
Prepared by her, my chosen mate.
There's nothing here of which to boast
But scrambled eggs and buttered toast.

I'm not disparaging this fare.
It's just that yesterday the air
With baking fragrance seemed to say
That we'd have breakfast rolls today.

She got up early and began
To fix and frost them, pan by pan;
But sad the ending of the tale—
She took them to a baked goods sale.

Yes, children, now the smell is gone.
The mem'ry, though, still lingers on.
Ah, you will learn the more you roam
That charity won't start at home.

This morning others know the treat
Of having Mother's rolls to eat,
And I just wish this wish the most
That they could see us eating toast.

A Beatitude

Blessed is he who has memories sweet—
Blessed above all the men he may meet—
Blessed his work and his worth.
Blessed is he who can turn in his mind
Fond recollections the past has enshrined.
Blessed his days on the earth.

Shadows may come, and the highway divide
Taking the one who has walked at his side,
Leaving him languid and lone.
Yet, as he looks down Togetherness Road,
He will be strengthened for life and its load,
Braced by the warmth he has known.

Blessed the memories both of them made,
Blessed the landscape they climbed unafraid.
Blessed their faith and their troth.
Blessed is he whose companion was love.
Blessed is she with Our Father above,
Blest by the God of them both.

Benediction

When our tots kneel to pray
At the end of the day,
And the Sandman's
awaiting his shift,
Standing close as can be
Unto Daddy and me
With his sifter
already to sift . . .

When this moment arrives
In each night of our lives,
I feel rather
guilty inside,
And I'm quite at a loss
To know why I was cross
With those two
who embody our pride.

Though it's clear as "Amen,"
They will try me again
When refreshed
by another night's rest,
There's a lump in my throat
Their devotions promote,
And it makes me a trifle
distressed.

It is when they recite,
"God bless Momma tonight."
That I'm mellowed
as mellow can be,
And I'm grateful, indeed,
That the dears intercede
For the likes of a
mother like me.

Bob's First Bible

From the minister's hand
Unto that of our son
Passed a gift very grand,
Passed the sign he was done
With his babyhood days
And was ready to look
Toward the wonder and ways
Of our Lord's Holy Book.

In his hand he received
What all folks have held fast
Who have ever believed
In the wisdom amassed
In one volume for man.
In one book, in one tome,
Lies the map, guide and plan
For all paths he may roam.

In his hand he now holds
Well inscribed with his name
That which fashions and molds
Every praiseworthy aim.
May he give life his best
That his name underscored
Be found worthy to rest
On the Book of the Lord.

A Boy and an Apple

The epitome of Autumn
At the glory of its peak
Is a fellow trudging schoolward
With a well-distended cheek.
There's no worry 'bout this swelling
In the region 'bove the jaw
For it holds a bite of apple
That is 'most too big to "chaw."

In his hand is clutched the segment
That is still around the core
But predoomed to reach that darkness
Where there's always room for more.
Of the Mackintosh and Wealthy
And, of course, the juicy Spy,
All the little sons of Adam
Stow away a big supply.

In the brown cheek of the youngster
Is the apple's cheek of red.
Both are symbols of the season
And the plentitude we're fed.
Could one have more satisfaction
For his filling men with joy
Than that felt by any apple
That has found its hungry boy?

But That Was Yesterday

Our girl appeared so light of limb,
Her face a sunlit smile,
To ask if she might play with him,
Her little pal, a while.
"But yesterday you thought him bad!"
I mentioned in dismay.
She never paused except to add,
"But that was yesterday!"

"You said he took your fav'rite toy.
You said he made you cry.
You said he was a naughty boy.
All this you can't deny.
And now you ask to go outside
With him who acts that way?"
Her answer seemed to almost chide,
"But that was yesterday!"

I envy you and every child
Too young to not forget,
Too young to let your life be styled
By anger and regret,
Too young to not forgive a wrong
And wise enough to say
What puts it where it should belong,
"But that was yesterday."

Candy Hound

He's a Husky, if you're looking
For his fam'ly pedigree,
But I'd give him diff'rent booking
If his breed were up to me.
Every form of sweet confection
Brings him forward with a bound.
He's a wizard on detection
For he's just a candy hound.

There are dogs folks use for hunting
'Cause they know the smell of prey.
There are dogs so skilled at stunting
That to see them folks will pay.
There are dogs with adoration
Of the men they've saved or found;
But there's none with concentration
Like a drooling candy hound.

With a sweet in my possession,
Though I travel north or south,
I am faced with an expression
That just takes it from my mouth.
'Bout my diet he seems chiding,
Like a conscience would expound,
'Til I find that I'm dividing
With a smacking candy hound.

The Cardinal

Little pine twig took to bouncing
As its method of announcing
That a visitor had
landed on its snow.
There, defying wintry weather,
Was a puff of bright red feather
Like a symbol of the courage
he must know.

Then he gave the world an earful
Of a song so sweet and cheerful
That it seemed the garden
ought to come awake;
But I'm sure he knew it wouldn't—
Knew his efforts simply couldn't
Melt the frosting on
a February cake.

Still he sang with all his being
'Til he really had me seeing
There against the lacy
background of the pine
One small scarlet heart a-beating
As for someone's heart competing.
What a lovely little
living Valentine!

The Center's Sister

Oh, just let me tell you, mister,
That it's not a spot divine
For a gal to be the sister
Of a fellow on the line.
Of the mightiest eleven
That can represent a school,
He who lines up with the seven
To his sister is a fool.

Though he snaps the ball at center
And begins the vital play,
It's the backfield guys who enter
As the heroes of the day.
When the crowd begins its cheering,
It is not the center's name,
But the halfback who's endearing
To the addicts of the game.

Yes, the halfback's sister glories
In a brother who's a boon,
In whose exploits are the stories
O'er which coeds sigh and swoon.
When the girls watch punts and passes,
Someone always seems to say
That which spikes our lass of lasses,
"What'd your brother do today?"

This experience is deflating,
I am sure you will admit.
But a moral worth the stating
Can be salvaged out of it:
Someone puts the ball in motion,
Blocks the challenges of strife,
To prepare land, air and ocean
For the touchdowns made in life.

Christmas Artistry

Oh, if I were an artist,
And I could paint—
I would not put on canvas
A king or saint,
But instead I would capture
The rapt surprise
On the face of a toddler
With Christmas eyes.

On my palette I'd blend in
The scent of pine
With the smells from the kitchen;
And I'd combine
With the sweetness of carols
What scripture tells
And retells in the echo
Of Christmas bells.

I would bring out the highlights
The oldster sees
As he watches the candles
Through memories.
I would try for the thrill that
New parents know
In the cradle's reflection
Of Christmas glow.

I'd design me a picture
Around a tree
In which all generations
Of family
Would be gathered in gladness—
In joyful mien.
Then I'd paint you right into
My Christmas scene.

A Christmas Memory

One year we had a cherub
To grace the church's play.
She hovered o'er the manger
Where little Jesus lay.
She told us driving homeward
Of shepherds watching flocks,
Of wisemen, and of Joseph
Who had the chicken-pox.

The scene was all assembled,
The characters in place,
But he, the gentle Joseph,
Was missing from his space.
There had to be a stand-in,
An alternate who mocked
The gestures learned by Joseph
So sadly chicken-pocked.

The angels all were sorry.
The teacher was upset.
A substitute for Joseph
Is rather hard to get.
The telling struck us funny.
We laughed for blocks and blocks . . .
And hoped our joy was catching
Not Joseph's chicken-pox.

The Church Bazaar

Ah, those ladies we know, and we love so well,
Have been planning for months on the things they'd
sell.

Inspiration and skill will admit no bar
When it's all in the name of the Church Bazaar.

Take a look at the aprons, and you will see
How industrious many a girl can be.
Take a look at the jam in the fancy jar,
And you'll open your purse at the Church Bazaar.


You will never escape from the candy booth
Without feeling the pull of your sweetest tooth,
And, of course, there's a dinner that has no par
'Cause it's cooked and it's served at the Church
Bazaar.

Oh, the Keeper of Marks in the Record Book
Must be pleased with this sight when he takes a look;
And I'll bet that he's wishing upon a star
For a chance to come down to the Church Bazaar.

The Church Choir

Long years ago a holy birth
Brought God's own choir down to earth
 From realms in heaven hung.
The angel with the solo part
Sang forth to every shepherd heart
 The greatest lyrics sung.

Today in step so solemn soft
A group ascends the choir loft
 With hymnbooks held before.
They come from every city street.
From every walk of life they meet
 To sing a sacred score.

These gifted voices rise in song
And lead the congregated throng
 In tones of reverent praise
Until they've lifted every voice
To Him who hears his church rejoice 
 Upon His Day of Days.

Of all the songs they've learned to sing,
In each they're only echoing
 Because no hymn is higher—
No soulful psalm can rise above
God's great expression of His love
 First sung by His own choir.

Church Organist

The one who makes an organ speak
 In worship's pious tone
Upon that day in every week
 Which is the Lord's alone
Is given life's most precious gift,
 The highest human goal—
The power to reach and truly lift
 Another fellow soul.

By fingertips the church is warmed
 With music holy sweet.
The hearts who come because they're stormed
 With more than they can meet
Are carried to a higher realm
 Upon inspired wings
Until they feel they're near the helm
 Of Him who knows all things.

The air is cleansed within the church
 And cleansed is every thought
The brain might raise to soul besmirch
 When those first strains are caught.
Each week at the appointed hour
 Our worldly woes succumb
To one, Oh Lord, who has the power
 To help "Thy Kingdom Come."

Cliptomania

There are those with some affliction
That they cannot overcome,
Like the powerful addiction
To the games of bridge or rum.
There are those to whom their knitting
Is a passion not denied,
As they always take to sitting
With a yarn bag at their side.

Many never throw the habit
Of expounding on their heirs.
They've an album, and they grab it
From their purse at all affairs.
But a practice far more gripping
Makes a vassal out of me.
It's the impulse to be snipping
Every recipe I see.

I have scads of scissored dinners—
Soups and salads—cakes and pies.
All the best of contest winners
Who have captured every prize
I have cut with good intention
Of employing all their tricks.
But in truth I have to mention
What I use is "ready-mix."

Collector's Items


A ticket stub, a bit of lace,
A button far from new
Are tucked into some saving space
And rarely come to view;
And yet you'd never toss them out
Because they are the keys
That turn your present world about
And back to memories.

Some locks of hair, pink-ribbon tied,
A small and pearly tooth
Produce a vision of your "pride"
In very early youth.
A rose book-pressed, a ragged toy,
A picture soiled and old
Can bring to cheeks a flush of joy
Because of thoughts they hold.

A yellowed clipping or a spoon,
A letter faint and worn,
A bit of verse, an old cartoon,
A program corner-torn
May seem as trash to other folk
Who in them have no stake.
To you they're fires that you may poke
To keep the past awake.

Columbus Once Dreamed

Columbus once dreamed
That a far eastern shore
Could be reached sailing west,
And he opened the door
To the light of
Discovery's gleam.
His persistence and faith
Overcame doubt and dread
Until three little ships
Spotted land up ahead . . .
And a dream became
More than a dream.

Men have dreamed they might sail
Through the seas of the sky.
To the orbs of our night
They were eager to fly.
Oh, how strange and
Fantastic a scheme . . .
Until suddenly soon
Two stepped out on the moon 
And a dream became
More than a dream.

Oh, you dreamers in life,
Dream away all its woe,
Dream how sickness and worry
And trouble may go.
Do it singly or
Work as a team;
Ply all seas of distress.
Sail all ships of the mind
With a voyager's courage
To push on and find
Till your dream becomes
More than a dream.

Communion

O Lord, we are a hungry crowd,
So needing to be fed.
Pass unto us with spirits bowed
Thy flesh-embodied bread.
Our lips are parched. We hold our cup
For blessing most divine.
Pass unto us and let us sup
Thy purple-blooded wine.

O take us to the Upper Room
Where once so long ago
Amid Your own encircling gloom
You helped the twelve to know
That You would be a part of them
Who'd take the bread You broke
And go from old Jerusalem
To spread the word You spoke.

O Lord, behold our sacrament—
The table we've prepared
On which the food Our Father sent,
The grain and grape, is shared.
In spirit break our bread today
And touch the chalice, too,
For us who use this means to say
That we remember You.

Daddy's Dilemma

When he's settled down to slumber
And the pillow feels just right,
All about him is in darkness
And he's bid the world "good night,"
There will come a gentle question
That he feels he can't ignore,
And I simply have to ask it,
"Are you sure you've locked the door?"

Now, he's certain that he did it.
He is prompt to tell me so.
When he thinks that I'm in dreamland,
There's a sound I've grown to know.
Since he can't recall exactly
When he did that nightly chore,
He must get into his slippers
And go out and test the door.

There's no use to lie a-thinking
'Cause his mind just draws a blank.
If his fortress falls to burglars,
He will have himself to thank;
So he tiptoes out in blackness,
Lest I realize the score
That he really wasn't certain
He had locked his castle door.

But those padded feet returning
Have a firm and steady stride,
Which informs me that my husband
Is awake and open-eyed;
And he rather thinks his helpmate
Should rely upon him more.
It was she who raised the question,
And, of course, he'd locked the door!

Den Mother

When the school day is through,
Yellow-scarfed suits of blue
Full of "devilish" drive
In one package arrive
With their coats and their boots
And their catcalls and hoots.
Fueled with cookies they start
Learning Indian art,
Stunts and musical chairs.
Be they Lions or Bears,
When, at last, they're in rout,
Can there be any doubt
As to who's "a good scout"?

Drink Up

In the glory days of autumn
There's a fullness to our cup,
As though beauty turned to nectar
With a call for drinking up.

It's a brew that's made from dipping
Verdant branches into tints
And then heating them with sunshine
Strained through mist, like jelling quince.

There's a heady, sweet aroma
That's euphoric to the brain.
Lift your cup and swallow quickly
Ere the contents turn to rain!

Drivers Training

For a great many years
I have driven a car.
I have driven it near,
And I've driven it far.
Over hills—around curves
I've observed every sign,
And I always had thought
I was doing just fine.

For considerable time—
Let us say sixteen years,
I have carried a passenger,
Heedless of fears,
Often heedless of scenery
Through which we'd ride,
But uncritic'ly always
She sat at my side.

All at once this has changed.
I make many mistakes
In my starting and steering
And use of the brakes.
From her lethargy
She has at last come alive.
Can you guess who it is
Who is learning to drive?

Eraser Time

"I get to clean erasers, Mom,"
Our little daughter sighed
In syllables of studied calm
That evidenced her pride.

"The teacher said Suzanne and I
Could have a turn today"
Was voiced so no one could deny
This work, indeed, was play.

It took me back—the way she spoke—
To my old grade school chores
When kids would raise a chalk-filled smoke
By pounding them outdoors.

Then powdered knowledge dusted dress
And shoes and hands and hair.
We swallowed lessons more or less
Suspended in the air.

Nostalgic'ly I mentioned this,
But Peggy looked aghast,
As though she thought what great abyss
Divides us from the past.

"But Mom," she cried, "that isn't how
We get erasers clean."
Then added, wrinkling up her brow,
"We do it by machine."

O Progress, you are wond'rous wise,
But, gee, it seems a crime
You had to go and mechanize
Good old Eraser Time!

Ever So Hummable

As I bustled 'bout the kitchen,
I was humming out a tune
With no thought as to its rhythm
For the hour was nearly noon.
Lunch was due but wasn't ready,
Yet I stopped when our small lad
Asked me frankly, "Who works harder?
Is it you or is it Dad?"

With the obvious advantage
Of not having Dad around,
You can very well imagine
What reply I quickly found:
"It's more fun to work like Daddy.
Dull my hours at home become!"
Unconvinced our son responded,
"But he doesn't get to hum!"

Well, that sort of got me thinking.
Being home is not so bad.
If one counts the little pleasures,
There are quite a few to add.
So, my sisters, chained to sameness,
When you're feeling kind of glum,
Just be thankful you're not Daddy
For he doesn't get to hum.

Every Town

Oh, every town is Bethlehem
In Christendom today.
Above each one the golden gem
Looks down to show the way . . .
To guide the wise across the years
With perfect rays of light
And solemnly to still their fears
Before the holy sight.

Yes, every town contains an inn
Where bustling throngs abide,
Too occupied with dross and din
To know that just outside
And to the back around the slope
A stable's standing still . . .
The symbol of immortal hope
For those who seek God's will.

To Bethlehems around the world
The herald angels sing
The great glad tidings God unfurled . . .
The birth of Christ, the King.
The skies are opened once again
That shepherds see their fill.
The words of "Peace, goodwill to men"
Become the echo still.

Oh, tinselled towns, 'twas troubled time
In Bethlehem of old
When men perceived the word sublime
Prophetic'llly unfold.
Go search your skies! You'll find the star
Has halted just above
So it may shine where doors ajar
Receive the Son of Love.

Father's Day Prayer

Almighty Father,
On this day
For fathers set aside,
Show me the path that I may lead
The ones I'm meant to guide.

Grant me the wisdom to advise—
To teach them right from wrong—
To help them find those basic worths
Which set apart the strong.

Make me a good and loving dad,
Consistent, patient, just.
Keep ever foremost in my mind
Those ones I hold in trust.

This one reward I ask from them,
And pray that it may be:
That they shall love their fathers well,
Both Thee, Dear Lord, and me.

A Father's Gifts

What does a father bestow on
his son
Ere he can claim that his title
is won?
More than the seed of a life
he must give.
He is the pattern of how men
should live:
Strength that supports without
having to show,
Patience to teach what a
youngster should know,
Loyalty's conscience and duty's
decree,
Courage to challenge the evils
that be,
Kindness, compassion, a measure
of cheer—
These to his son make the
father-role clear,
Plus what lifts men 'bove the
slime of the sod:
Faith in each other and faith
in their God.

What does a daughter receive
from her Dad?
Comfort when something is
making her sad,
Reasoned advice when dilemmas
occur
Thoughtfully, tenderly, tailored
for her;
Hope to finance all her castles
in air

Lent with an interest both of
them share;
Joy o'er her joy; mirth o'er
her mirth,
Pride in her works and her
womanly worth;
Home as the model until she
is grown
Like unto that she would have
for her own;
Knowledge that she has his
favor for life,
Sharing love's pinnacle close
to his wife.

First Day of School

I will not forget the ev'ning
Just before that fateful day
When the school bell first invited
Our small son to come its way.
While he dreamed of his adventure
On his sheet and pillow cruise
And his Mother fixed his clothing,
Daddy went to shine his shoes.

All the soil and playful scuffing—
All the marks of baby fun—
Daddy covered up with polish,
And, at last, when he was done,
He presented them to Mother—
Each with upward curving toe,
And he said, "You know, I wonder
Where those little feet will go!"

"In the morning they are taking
Their first step away from home.
Will they walk to fame and fortune?
In what region will they roam?
I just hope that he is happy
With whatever path they choose,
And he'll someday have a fellow
For whom he can polish shoes."

First Haircut

I remember the day
When he first took the chair,
And we looked with alarm
At the falling of hair.
We bemoaned that our babe
Then appeared such a boy,
And, believe me, for him
There was little of joy.

For he kicked and he squirmed,
And he yelled and he cried.
Though we did all our tricks,
He just wouldn't subside.
Yet I knew he would live,
Though these antics were bad.
But the one who concerned me
Was really his Dad.

To the same barber shop
He had gone since a child
And had always behaved
In a manner quite mild.
I could tell by the look
On his darkening face
That it really was painful
To suffer disgrace.

First Snowfall

There lives an old lady somewhere on high
Who sleeps all the summer above the sky.
When days become cold and the leaves burnt red,
She rouses and shakes out her feather bed.

I know this is true, though I can't explain:
Whenever we come to the end of rain,
And big fluffy flakes to the earth are sped,
It's she who is shaking her feather bed.

The Fisherman

If he's sitting in a rowboat
Or a presidential yacht
In the summer's steaming sunshine
Or a cool refreshing spot,
All the finny folk consider
It's the same old shady plot.

If he has expensive tackle
Or a bobber and a pole,
Still the inner man is playing
Just the same old changeless role
While he hears sweet Mother Nature
Hum a ditty to his soul.


It is splendid relaxation
To be waiting for a swish!
If his wife could only see him,
There is this I think she'd wish:
That at home he'd have the patience
He is showing to a fish.

Freedom

God, bless this mighty land
of ours—
This land where freedom's
fruit and flowers
Are native to the soil.
Oh, may their tillers ever know
It takes man's love to make
them grow
And his unceasing toil.

God, bless each one who
pulls a weed
Or sows anew a freedom
seed
Where never it's been tried;
And help it firmly form its root
From which sweet benefits may
shoot
Until it blooms worldwide.

A Friend like You

When you are near, I can't pretend.
I shed the show—the sham. 
Because in you I've found a friend
Who knows me as I am.

You see when trouble has me down
Or I've joined worry's crew.
Beneath my smile you find the frown
Like old paint coming through.

You seem to say the words I need
At just the proper hour.
Of all advice on which I feed,
It's yours that gives me power.

Another thing that I have found—
When joy at me has glanced,
Whenever you have been around,
Its presence is enhanced.

It's more than passive love and good.
It's what you make me be!
Yet never mention—though you could—
The frailties you see.

And not the least of these I fear
Are words long overdue
That tell how much it means, my dear,
To have a friend like you.

The Garment

The garment is held for the world to touch,
The garment that made men whole,
The garment that's needed so very much
To heal every heart and soul.

We grope in our blindness to what is right.
We stumble when we would stand.
We fall for we're lacking the proper sight
He'd give if we reached a hand.

We're deaf when we hasten to close the ear
To wisdom He sought to teach,
And yet He is ready to help us hear
If only we just would reach.

We cripple ourselves with hate and war,
We folks on this grumbling globe,
By holding the aim of an even score
Instead of a seamless robe.

The garment exists with its magic power,
Though many its folds condemn.
It's waiting for us in our troubled hour
To reach for its healing hem.

In God's House

Our God has welcomed home a friend—
A mother, sister, spouse,
Who's found upon her journey's end
His many-mansioned house.
She has the promise Jesus made.
She sees His holy face.
She knows the joys that never fade—
The everlasting grace.

Before she passed to realms above,
She lived a life of worth,
A life of loyalty and love—
Her legacy to earth.
The ones whom loss has stricken numb
All tearfully aver
How very much to them has come
Because of knowing her.

They're lonely—those she left behind,
So sorely bent with grief,
But she would have them bear in mind
The strength of her belief
And rest assured she's not alone.
God's met her at the door
With those who've clasped her as their own—
Her loved ones gone before.

Godward

Her star has drifted Godward,
Has faded from our sight,
Has left the mortal orbit
To gain the greater height.
While we're engulfed in greyness—
In girding gloom of grief,
Her star is where it's cloudless,
The home of her belief.

Her star divinely lighted
To shine upon the earth
Was radiant with kindness,
Magnificent with worth.
It never dimmed to duty
Nor let its beam subside
When needed in life's darkness
To be a loved one's guide.

Her star's forever shining.
It's shining here below
Because each one who knew her
Was given of its glow—
Our heritage held earthbound
And severed from the source
Which now is lighting Heaven
On its eternal course.

Golden Gateway

The gateway to your golden years
Today is set ajar.
The two of you with joint careers
Have traveled very far.
You've walked through vales where sorrows dwell.
You've climbed the hills of hope.
You've found how faith and love dispel
The fears that make folks grope.

Together you approach the gate.
You push it—arm in arm—
In just the way you've greeted Fate
To find its further charm
For fifty years of married life,
For fifty years of love,
For fifty years as man and wife
With trust in God above.

To you God's given in return
The life of each to each
And friends that only friends can earn
Whose joyful thoughts must reach
The Maker who looks down today
Upon you two, my dears,
And listens as we pause to pray:
"God bless your golden years."

Graduation Day

Now you pause for graduation
On the stairs of measured time
And give thanks for preparation
Unto those who've helped
your climb.

Parents watch with mixed emotion—
Sad that years have quickly sped,
Proud of you and your promotion,
Anxious 'bout the days ahead.

Some advice we still are giving,
(As, of course, you knew we would).
Life is meant for fullest living.
Breathe in deeply of its good.

Know yourself—whate'er you master.
Like yourself—on that depends
Whether lone you face disaster
Or enjoy a wealth of friends.

Of your goal make wise selection.
In the balance put its cost;
So that time in retrospection
Will find nothing precious lost.

As you leave this step of learning
And assume another role,
Keep the quest for knowledge burning
In your heart and mind
and soul.

And may God bestow his blessing.
May He grant you 'long the way
Joy like that you are possessing
On your Graduation Day.

Graduation Prayer

O Lord, be with the ones today
Who walk from learning's halls.
The world awaits them as we pray.
The future softly calls,
And they are eager to achieve!
They're restless to begin
Those tasks and goals which they
believe
Are theirs to woo and win.

No age began with brighter morn
Than this You let them hold.
Into a boundlessness they're born
Where wonders will unfold
With speed like none have known
before.

Oh, what a time to live:
To solve life's problems and explore—
To gain, to grow, to give.

O Lord, make each of them aware
Of what is best in man;
That this, Your world, is truly fair,
And that You have a plan
For each of them who wills to find
Your purpose and Your way.
Oh, help them keep these thoughts
in mind
Who graduate today.

A Grandpa

So you tell us you're a "Grandpa"
In a smug, expansive way!
Though the world is making grandpas
By the thousands every day,
You've a corner on the market.
You're a product that's unique,
And the cause of your advantage
Hasn't even learned to speak.

Yes, an awful lot of power
Is emitted by a birth.
Let the clock announce the hour,
And a grandpa hits the earth
All prepared to greet his cronies
And proclaim the joyous fact
Like an actor who's been summoned
For the role he's longed to act.

Oh, we're glad you are "a Grandpa."
Yes, the title fits you well!
You've a pass to see the toylands
And buy all the things they sell.
You've a ticket to the re-run
Of the raising of a child,
And an audience who'll listen
To the wisdom you've compiled.

Haloed Hamburger

Sometimes when we sit down at night,
I serve the food by candlelight.
I think its softened glow
Can melt the day's annoying cares,
The petty ones—the grave affairs,
Until in peace they go.

I hope the taper's waxen flame
With magic fingertips can tame
The fret-lines on my brow
Until to him I might appear
The girl he knew in yesteryear—
A real achievement now.

Another way that firelight's best,
Is one that's passed a rugged test
Since prehistoric day
When some smart cavewife used this plan
To make her unsuspecting man
Think meatloaf was gourmet.



Help!

Little Peggy had a mower
That she ran upon the rug.
It had balls that went revolving
Every time it got a tug.
And, of course, this made a racket
Bound to please an infant ear,
Though its constant repetition
Didn't make her parents cheer.

Well, to cut the story shorter:
Bob and Peggy were at play
When I left them for a moment.
Then her chattering so gay
Changed to rend the placid ether
With a squealing, angry cry,
And the cherubs were in battle
When I came to question why.

Master Robert had the mower.
Peggy fought for its return.
Both were yanking on the handle
When I asked if I might learn
What had caused the sudden rumpus
And the lady's noisy woe.
Without pause, her brother answered,
"Why, I'm helping Peggy mow!"

It was this that made me wonder
'Bout the aid we sometimes give
To the folks who don't request it,
Though we feel they couldn't live
If we didn't grant assistance
Or advice on them bestow.
Do you think it bears a likeness
To his helping Peggy mow?

The Highest Hill


The highest hill in all the world
Is not a lofty peak.
It's not a summit vapor-furled
That mountain climbers seek.
It doesn't reach a timber line
With vegetation's loss,
And yet it's high in height divine
Because it held a cross.

The Skull was but a little hill
Beyond the city's wall
Until the day men sought to kill
The greatest of them all,
And then it rose to touch the sky,
To touch the clouds sublime,
To touch horizons heaven high
That tower over time.

The elevation Jesus wrought
Was not in feet or miles
But in the realm of human thought
And human living styles;
And so the highest hill appears
For everyone to scan—
The elevation down the years
That's elevated man.

His Faith

Again the Star—the wondrous sight—
Spreads near and far translucent light
To shine upon Christ's birth.
We never tire to hear the news
The angel choir each year reviews
Of peace—good will on earth.
We bring our gifts. We sing our praise.
Our spirit lifts in many ways
To make us feel of worth.

In thought we draw unto the inn 
And watch in awe that life begin
Just as it once began—
The life that taught of love supreme
And how man ought to seek his dream
With faith its central plan.
As in this season, joy we find,
Let's keep the reason well in mind:
Our God had faith in man.

His Rainhat's Revenge

Oh, my spouse has a hat
That's decidedly old.
"You are not wearing that!"
He is frequently told;
But he does—every time.
It is frayed at the brim,
And to don it's a crime—
Just to me—not to him.

Though its "sweat" band betrays
What that word really means,
All seems part of some phase
Like a teenager's jeans.
Well, I spiked up my spunk,
And I washed it a bit.
Yes, you guessed it—it shrunk;
So it just doesn't fit.

I had gambled and lost.
I accepted this fate.
'Twas at minimal cost.
I would watch it and wait.
Through its trial, stains and dirt
Showed remarkable will;
And its pride wasn't hurt
'Cause he's wearing it still.

Hope and Harvest

O God of Hope and Harvest,
Who gives our daily bread,
Again at this Thanksgiving
We bow a grateful head.
Though corn and grain is gathered
In quite a diff'rent way,
We echo with our heartbeats
That first Thanksgiving Day.

We thank Thee, God, for planting
That little pilgrim band
And testing it with hardship
In this untested land;
For sowing with those seedlings
Ideals both strong and just
That caused an infant nation
To breathe, "In God We Trust."

We thank Thee, God, for giving
The fruits of faith again,
From fields of love and tillage,
From trust in Thee and men.
O God of Hope and Harvest,
Hear us who humbly pray
And thank Thee for Thy blessings
On this Thanksgiving Day.

The House of the Lord

The House of the Lord
Has been built by man,
Been built out of board
On a simple plan,
Been built out of stone
With resplendent trim
To furnish a throne
On the earth for Him.

The House of the Lord
Has been built in hills
Where sweet harpsichord
Joins the whip-poor-wills.
It stands on the street
Of the largest town
Where humble folk meet
Those of great renown.

The House of the Lord,
By whatever name,
If there He's adored
Is for all the same—
A temple, a shrine,
A cathedral or kirk
Is equally fine
If parishioners work.

The House of the Lord
Can be empty space.
If He is ignored,
None will feel His grace.
The House may be grand,
But this truth is known:
He never can stand
Living there alone.

Husband on a Diet

"No more sugar in my coffee,
And the cream I'm cutting too,
'Cause I just tried on the trousers
Of my Sunday, dress-up blue,
And I know that leaning over
Would explode them at the seat.
Now, the only way I'll wear them
Is to watch the things I eat.

"You will have to help me do it
'Cause you really are to blame.
I didn't have this figure
Back before you took my name.
It has been the fancy cooking
That you've heaped upon my plate,
And I couldn't hurt the feelings
Of my everloving mate.

"So I gobbled up potatoes
With their lakes of gravy brown,
And I ate your salad dressing
For I hate to see you frown
When you think that I'm not liking
All the things you cook and bake,
But I've known from the beginning
It was all a big mistake.

"Let's reduce the serving portions—
About half would be enough.
When I climb a little stairway,
I am finding that I puff;
And this roll around my middle
Is just cutting off my steam.


"Say, is there some choc'late syrup
For this plain vanilla cream?"

Identifying

I have noticed of late
A new trait in my mate
As he's watching his
favorite games:
He's a more ardent fan
Of the middle-aged man,
Long enrolled on
the roster of names.

He will cheer to the death
Him whose shortness of breath
Makes the rounding of
bases a chore,
And will actually pout
When the "ump" calls him out
Or denies him the chance
of a score.

And the man who must launch
'Round his half-circle paunch
Every drive, every chip,
every putt
Has a gall'ry of one
Lauding him till he's done
With a loyalty
none could rebut.

It is far more than luck
If a goal-gaining puck
Is propelled by
veteran star. 
And the line that is strong
Is the one all year long
Of which age isn't
seen as a bar.

Now to tell you the truth
It is keen, agile youth
That we champion
most of the time,
But I clap for those souls
Who hang on to their roles
And help fans to be
proud of their "prime."

Indian Summer

Moccasined Maiden, warmhearted and fair,
Adding a quill to your raven-black hair,
What have you brought for the good earth to wear?

Winter is coming, I'm sure you've been told.
All that you love will be frosty and cold.
What do you carry and softly unfold?

Ah, it's a colorful blanket, I see,
Made from the fast-falling leaves of each tree,
Woven at Manitou's yearly decree.

When it is laid where all sleeping plants lie,
Signals of smoke you will send to the sky,
Telling it's time for the snowflakes to fly.

In Haste

Dear God, I'm in an awful rush.

I have so much to do.

The minutes and the hours crush

Each day before I'm through.

I haven't time to write to friends.

I haven't time to know

The ones on whom my joy depends.

I have to hurry so.

I'm much too busy day and night

With problems big and small.

I work on them with all my might

But cannot solve them all.

It isn't that I don't desire

To slacken some the speed,

But in me there's a burning fire

Velocity must feed.

I haven't time to pause, dear Lord,

To tell You in this prayer

The things that really have me floored—

The trials I have to bear;

But You—who sets the stars afloat

And runs all things that be—

I quite expect that You'll devote

A lot of time to me.

In Silence

In silence, Lord, I pause to pray

For strength and usefulness

this day;

For love from You I may invest

Where its return to us

is best;

For honest work to stir my soul

And urge me toward a finer

role;

For hopeful signs that You will

bless

A dream of mine with Your

success;

For selfless thought, the kind

that grows

And bears what each to each

one owes;

For patience in what trials

there be

Like unto that You've shown

to me;

For pride tonight in my review

When I give back this day

to You.

In silence I would make this

clear—

The kind of silence, Lord,

You hear.

Inn and Manger

The years have turned the Inn to dust.
The Manger still survives.
It's been enshrined by love and trust
In many million lives.
It's been preserved all down the years
As man's supreme retreat,
A refuge from his worldly fears,
A haven from defeat.

The Inn was filled that holy night
With very busy men,
With men who might have done the right
But had no time just then
To be the slightest bit concerned
Where Mary laid her head,
But more than that we've never learned
'Bout those who had a bed.

The Manger stood serenely still
Apart from worldly din,
The kind of place our Father's will
Could come and enter in,
And where its presence was a must
In guiding mortal lives;
So while the Inn has turned to dust,
The Manger still survives.

Instead

He hoped for health—a robust frame—
Like that which builds athletic fame.
Instead he got a frail physique,
But all the patience one could seek.

He wanted money that would buy
What only wealth can satisfy.
Instead his substance from the start
Was in an understanding heart.

He dreamt of power to control.
He craved a dominating role.
Instead dependence made him wise
And gave him love, the sweetest prize.

Denied the big "important" three,
Of life he made a mastery
And proved that one can be ahead
With what God lets him have instead.

Invitation to Prayer


In the silence of your soul,
In your innermost retreat,
Let your prayer make you whole.
Let it wipe away defeat.

Let your wounded spirit live
As refreshed as by a spring
With the waters that forgive
All the weaknesses you bring.

Bring your sorrow to the Source
Of the peace that understands.
Bring your trouble and remorse
Where the tide will wash the sands . . .

And leave clean and clear the shore
Of your future and your past;
So you'll know as ne'er before
How your present should be cast.

Bring your loneliness and pain,
Bring the writhing of regret
Where they'll fall as summer rain
On the fields that soon forget.


Bring the unsaid where it's meet,
Where it's tested for its goal; 
In your innermost retreat,
In the silence of your soul.

Jack-o'-Lantern

The sculptured pumpkin grins to see
Small bands of goblins on a spree
Beneath a harvest moon.
His toothless smile of candlelight
Peers out upon this spooky night
As though he were immune.

He watches devils dressed in red,
Who other nights would be in bed,
Make boldly brave attack
Upon the neighbors' lighted door,
And he who answers they implore
With widely opened sack.

He winks his eye with flick'ring flame
Because he knows them all by name . . .
Each cat and clown and ghost.
Beneath those masks of gaudy hue
He recognizes who is who
In this unearthly host.


Before the tallow taper's low,
Two little tykes incognito,
Who've learned this night's command,
Will haunt the houses close to home
Like convoyed specters scared to roam 
'Less Daddy's near at hand.

2e

Joyful Sound

I like to think the Lord looks down
Upon the Sunday throng
That meets in every church in town
To lift its soul in song.
I like to think He hears the choir
And makes the tones compound
Until they're destined to inspire
With such a joyful sound.

I like to think the solo's choice
Is blessed as it is sung
'Cause He directs the gifted voice
To rise and float among
The worshippers who sit and hear
The notes that He has crowned;
So they will touch the list'ning ear
With such a joyful sound.

I like to think He stands by me
And shares my hymnal page
Because I sing so full and free
The songs of every age.
I like to think He even molds 
My flat notes into round;
Because His singing church unfolds
With such a joyful sound.

Keep Me Alive

Oh, keep me alive while I'm living,
Lord.

While I'm walking the ways of
earth,
Please point to the places
You've underscored
As the objects of vital worth.

Oh, help me forget what was
yesterday,
Be it gladsome or filled
with gloom,
By filling the minutes that
are today
'Til there isn't a bit of room.

Oh, keep me alive while I'm living,
Lord.

Keep me seeking some new
frontier
That I haven't found or as yet
explored
With the zeal of a pioneer.

Oh, please open my eyes so they'll
see what's good,
And my ears so they'll hear
what's true,
And my mind so men's motives
are understood,
And my heart to the voice of
You.

Oh, keep me alive to the leaves
and snow
And the laughter of fellow
souls.

Let a mild discontent through
my being flow
So I'll struggle for higher
goals.

Oh, keep me alive while I'm living,
Lord,

With an interest in all I see,
Lest the hour approach when I'll
feel I'm bored
With the world, or what's worse—
with me.

Let Me See

Let me see something lovely,
O Lord, let me see
All the beauty and magic
And wonders there be!
Let me watch trees a-budding
And birds on the wing.
Let me listen to crickets
And hear streamlets sing.

Let me view every mountain
With awe that it's due.
Let me feel every flower's
A mirror of You.
In the springtime and summer,
In winter and fall,
Let me sense that each season
Has meaning for all.

Open vistas to pastures
Where pictures are real.
Sun and stars, sea and sky,
Let me know their appeal.
Let me see something lovely,
O Lord, let me see
That it's all here for seeing,
But that's up to me.

Liberty

Oh, Liberty that lies within
The hearts and minds of men,
Recall once more our origin
When patriots with pen
Declared to all the lands of earth
Our country would be free
From that great day that marked her birth;
And we might cherish thee.

Oh, Liberty that lives by love
And all-inspiring awe,
Devoted to your source above
And man's defining law,
Give courage to those mortal shells
Who still enshrine your flame
And in whose breasts excitement swells
At mention of your name.

Oh, Liberty, with us abide.
Make Duty play her role
By walking ever at your side
To your appointed goal.
Be vigilant for dangers lurk!
Be watchful day by day
For some despise the fact you work
And would lay waste your way.

Oh, Liberty, this is your soil,
Your first and fav'rite home,
To which men look howe'er they toil
And where and when they roam.
Oh, you're its spirit; you're its drive—
Intangible but real—
Which each of us if you survive
Must be allowed to feel.

The Lincoln Legacy

Rare the shadow that has lengthened
'Cross a century in span.
Rare the memory that's strengthened
In the legacy of man
As it leaves each generation
To descend unto the next.
Rare, indeed, true approbation
Finds so tarnish-proof a text.

From the earth of old Kentucky
God brought forth a rugged babe,
Poor but proud, and plain but plucky;
And men crowned him "Honest Abe."
Pain and loss had ways of etching
Lines no tribute could erase—
Lines the world has since been sketching
To preserve his mortal face.

He had humor and compassion
And a will to do the right—
To bring courage into fashion
And put honor at its height.
This, his image, will not perish.
It will outlast pride and pelf.
This God left for man to cherish
And to aim at for himself.

Little Ashtray

Around the tree were gifts galore
That we had purchased at the store
And gaily wrapped so we might hide
Surprises to be found inside;
But one stood out with boy-tied bow
So ample that it couldn't show
A little ashtray made of clay—
Bob's gift to Dad on Christmas Day.

Of all the presents lying there
To dance small eyes and make them stare;
(Including those that Santa brought)
The first that Bob's small peepers sought,
As 'neath the tree I saw them dart,
Was one he'd formed with hands and heart—
A little ashtray made of clay:
His gift to Dad on Christmas Day.



When ties and shirts for Dad to wear
And socks and such were all laid bare—
Their wraps and ribbons poised in piles—
I saw those two exchanging smiles.
The smaller one by joy was blessed.
The bigger one said he liked best
The little ashtray made of clay:
Bob's gift to him on Christmas Day.

Little League

Q. What is this sport? Does it have a name?

A. Yes, it's a Little League Baseball Game.

Q. Who are the boys with the caps of blue?

A. They are the players for "you know who."

Q. Who are the ones in the bright red hats?

A. They are the other team's noisy brats.

Q. Who guides the Blues through thick and thin?

A. Him we call "Coach" if they get a win.
'Course he gets names that he wouldn't choose
On the occasions they chance to lose,
Or if he pulls from the going game
Someone who happens to bear our name.

Q. Who are those people so strangely tense
Clustered together inside the fence?

A. They are the parents. Watch them instead,
And you'll be certain which team's ahead.

Q. Who thinks this game is a barrel of fun?

A. Kin of the chap with the first home run.

Q. Who is that woman who's moaning so?

A. Mother of him who is pitching low.

Q. Who's madly waving his arms about?

A. Dad of the outfielder—too far out.

Q. Who just gave forth that indignant burst?

A. They with the lad who was "out" at first.

Q. Who are those two so completely gay?

A. Theirs was the boy with the double play.

Q. Who thinks the ump has been doped or bought?

A. Relatives "robbed" by a ball well caught.

Q. Who's so excited they flip their lids?

A. Well, let me tell you, it's not the kids.

Love's Share

It's a wonderful feeling

When somebody dear

Can be proud of revealing

A reason to cheer—

When he's had a promotion,

Success overdue,

A reward for devotion.

We share in it too.

And our insides are hollow,

Deflated and hurt,

When we know he must swallow

What isn't dessert:

Disappointment, reverses,

And times that are blue.

It is one of love's curses

To share in these too.

Those we love are provided

With joys and with woes

By a life many-sided,

As each of us knows.

Be it burden or blessing

We're destined to bear,

Neither lot's as distressing

As no one's to share.

Making a Memory

Many ways have been used for expressing
How it really is best to be good,
How in time it is always a blessing
To have done all the things that one should;
So I only am adding another;
If you're planning a deed that's amiss,
Bear in mind before doing it, brother:
"You are making a mem'ry of this!"



From a mem'ry there is no escaping.
Every bad one is full of regret,
And it sits there inside you a-gaping
With a visage you never forget.
Every good one is peaceful and pleasant
And a warmth when your spirit is tried;
And you're glad when it answers, "I'm present!
I'm sitting right here with your pride!"

All the time there are mem'ries a-growing.
You are adding to them every day.
All the bad ones, like debts that are owing,
Haunt your mind, but there's no way to pay.
All the good ones march forth in precision
When you ask for a moment of bliss;
So just think before every decision:
"I'm making a mem'ry of this!"

The Man I Married

Is he still the man you married?
Asks a current magazine.
On this page I found I tarried.
What in heavens did they mean?

Does he like to take you dancing,
(Well, he really never did)
Or is TV so entrancing
That in darkness he is hid?

Is he slim and trim and dapper—
With a healthy head of hair?
(If he is, then I'm a flapper
With no crowsfeet to repair.)

Just how often are you lazy
And have breakfast served in bed?
(Well, my mem'ry may be hazy,
But I rise or go unfed.)

Does he take you out to dinner—
Bring you little gifts of sweets?
(Since he knows I should be thinner,
I'd be wary of such treats.)

Does he speak with warm assurance
How his love for you is true?
(After thirty years endurance
And the things that we've been through!)

I don't want the man I married.
I prefer the one I see.
For, in truth, the man I married
Wouldn't want the likes of me.

The Meeting of Minds

Outside the school I saw him sit—
A mutt as black as night,
Except beneath his chin a bit
There was a spot of white.



The pensive look upon his face
Revealed the ones he knew
Had somehow by that awful place
Been gobbled up from view.

Alone and desolate he sat
With thoughts as dark as he.
I doubted that a passing cat
Could ease his misery.

The deadly quiet of it all
While they must read and add!
Can this compare to playing ball?
His playmates had "been had."

Yet "doggedly" he would abide,
Not knowing whom to blame,
'Til they emerged—those ones inside
Whose thoughts were much the same.

A Meeting Prayer

O Lord, please bless us as we meet.
Be with us as we pray,
And let our hearts in concert beat
In what we do today.
Oh, bless the cause for which we're met—
Its method and its aim,
And let us not in haste forget
The reason that we came.

We want to make the earth we know
A better place to live.
By work and time and thoughts we sow,
We seek to serve and give
To others on this planet's plot
More happiness and hope.
Oh, let our vision falter not!
Oh, guide us in our scope.

But worthy as our mission be,
Let not its essence slip.
Oh, keep us so that we will see
We're here in fellowship.
Protect our tie and all it binds—
Each thread that makes its length,
And help us keep within our minds
From whence it gets its strength.

Men of America

Men who were daring and men who were brave
Sailed through the fury of tempest and wave,
Certain the future for all of mankind
Lay not in hate they were leaving behind
But in that country they struggled to find,
America.

God-fearing men for whom conscience made might
Wrote for all time their conceptions of right,
Pushed the frontiers and invented and tilled,
Leaving to each the career that he willed;
All in an effort to solidly build
America.

Nowhere on earth have men prospered as here
Under the code of no favor or fear,
Men who bore muskets our freedom to reap,
Men who have never let liberty sleep!
God, may we always have men who will keep
America!

Merry Christmas

May the Father who watched
o'er the Baby who lay
In a manger's crude crib
on that first Christmas Day
Also watch over you
now the year's nearly done,
And you've come to the time
of the birth of His Son.

Mid the roar of confusion
in battle and mart,
May the song of the angels
be heard in your heart.
In this God-given pause
in your grasp for some goal,
May the wonder of shepherds
refreshen your soul.

May the Star in its splendor
symbolically shine
In the corners where truth
needs an answer divine.
May it guide you today
as it guided aright
Those who, seeking more wisdom,
once followed its light.

May you sense the true spirit—
the meaning sublime—
All untarnished by trifles
and turmoil and time.
If you do, and you feel
that it fills in some need,
Then your Christmas this year
will be merry indeed.



Mewsette

Oh, I said I wouldn't do it.
Not again would I go through it.
We would never have
another little pet.
Gone were days of love and losing—
Scenes both tender and amusing,
But I lost all my
resistance to Mewsette.

To surprise us both, our daughter
Saved her coin and went and bought her
So's to mark our rather
distant wedding day.
All dissuasion went unheeded
Cause she felt her parents needed
Something active since
their kids had gone away.

My defenses quickly crumbled
To a purr machine that rumbled
With a most amazing volume
for her size.
When she chose me for her "lapping,"
It was me that she caught napping—
Or, perhaps, it was the
candor in her eyes.

Once again I find I'm smitten
By a whiffet of a kitten.
On her chewing and her
clawing you can bet.
But among the marks she's making
In her primal undertaking
Is to scratch upon our hearts
the name, Mewsette.

The Middle One

Three crosses rose upon a hill
The natives called "The Skull".
Three lives the Romans sought to spill—
Three beings to annul.
Three bodies wracked with mortal pain
For deeds that they had done.
Three dying men, yet it was plain
All watched the Middle One.

The crowd looked up to Him they'd named
To take a killer's place.
Their cries of "Crucify" seemed tamed
As they beheld His face.
On either side of Him there bled
A thief before the sun
Who turned a heavy hanging head
To watch the Middle One.

The first condemned employed this hour
To mock the Prince of Peace.
The other asked for Jesus' power
To gain his soul's release.
What we would give if we could share
Before our race be run
The promise this one heard out there
From Him, the Middle One.

The Minister

He's our modern day apostle,
And, like Peter, he's the rock
Of his church, be it colossal
And consume a city block
Or be shelter barely shielding
Those who gather there to pray,
But whose hearts are made for yielding
To the words he's come to say.

He's the prophet of the present.
He's the harbinger of hope.
When our pasture isn't pleasant,
When we hesitate or grope,
When we sin or sink in sorrow,
He's the shepherd with the rod
Bidding us, not just to borrow,
But to keep our faith in God.

He, the pastor and the preacher,
The disciple of today,
Is the congregation's teacher
And the leader of the way
Toward the things of soul and spirit,
As though he could hear the plea
Like those twelve of old could hear it
When the Lord said, "Follow me!"

Molders of Men

Most folks well worth a memory
Have statues—still in stone,
But teachers mold their monuments
From living flesh and bone.
The student who goes out in life
And makes himself a name
Admits unto the heart of him
Some teacher shares his fame.

I never hear a pianist
With talent true and rare,
But in the shadows I can see
His teacher standing there.
No skillful doctor ever saved
The lives of human kind
Without the seeds some teacher stored
Within his fertile mind.

All lawyers, dentists, engineers,
All men beloved by men,
Remember what some teacher taught
And quote it now and then.
No actor, writer, carpenter,
No boxer, you'll allow,
Pursues his chosen field unless
Some teacher showed him how.

Yes, teachers mold their monuments.
They build them year by year—
Not like the ancient pyramids,
So awesome and austere,
Which time, in time, will wear away;
But spurning solemn stone,
Our teachers mold eternally
From living flesh and bone.

Morning Prayer

Help me this day to do my best.
Help me to be of cheer—
In what I do make manifest
In me a will sincere.

Help me to help another soul
Before this day shall end.
Help me to near my mortal goal
By adding one more friend.

Grant me the patience and the sight
That I so sorely need
To choose the actions that are right,
To think and live Your creed.

Give me the ever present grace—
The ever constant aim—
So should I meet You face to face,
I shan't look down in shame.

Motherhood

In her arms a generation
Is held lovingly from birth.
In her eyes there's adoration
And assurance of its worth.

From her tongue is heard the teaching
Of its heritage and hope,
And her hands coax forth its reaching
For the infinite in scope.

She's its ever present model.
She's its fortress, faith and food
From the time it starts to toddle
'Til with age it is imbued.

She's the confidante and healer
Of the wounds to which it's heir,
And the pard'nable revealer
Of the best it has to bear.

Every time God's sought assistance
For some purpose wholly good,
With the breath of its existence
He's entrusted Motherhood.

My Cloister

Oh, Lord, when sadness comes to me,
When grief is hard to bear,
There is a place I seek to be
And always find You there . . .
A place not held by mortal wall
Nor set by human goal,
A place I somehow like to call
The cloister of my soul.

Oh, Lord, when fate is most benign,
When pleasures overflow,
I, too, would thank You, Lord of mine,
And then I also go
Where I am certain we will meet,
That spot we both control:
Our rendezvous and my retreat,
The cloister of my soul.

Oh, Lord, most days are in between—
Not truly bad or good,
And it's on them I should be seen
Where I am understood,
Where You will guide my ways from sin
And make my spirit whole,
Because I know You're waiting in
The cloister of my soul.

My Macaroni Necklace

I've a macaroni necklace
That I've kept with loving pride.
On a strand of yarn 'twas threaded
And the ends together tied.
Then the artist scanned the colors,
And they say all artists do,
And decided that she'd paint it
With a vivid shade of blue.

'Course she tinted every finger
And the table and the floor,
Which is par for any moppet
Of the tender age of four.
But the joy in her creation
And the thought of the surprise
She had fashioned for her momma
Put a sparkle in her eyes.

If I'd worn a crown of silver
Set with diamond and pearl,
I could not have been as queenly
To my wee admiring girl
As I was bedecked for washing,
Sweeping floors and cooking stew
In the macaroni necklace
That my daughter painted blue.

My Throttled Husband


He stood and watched the little train
That ran around the track.
His rapt expression made it plain
It's journey moved him back
Along the route of many years
To when he was a boy
And in the ranks of engineers
That guided such a toy.

The lighted window of the store,
With gleaming, glassy shield,
Prevented handling as of yore,
Yet couldn't help but yield
To him who shifted in his mind
The switches on the way
And took the tunnels as it twined
Through hills of yesterday.

The little box-cars didn't know
How full of thought their load.
The red caboose would never show
The stowaway who rode
And followed every dip and climb.
Who says the world of boys—
Regardless of their age in time—
Becomes too old for toys?

National Law Day Prayer

Dear God, today we stand in awe
Of You, who art the Lord of Law—
Judge Advocate Supreme,
Whose rules revolve our rolling sphere
And summon seasons to appear,
Help us to live Your theme.

Your code committed unto stone
Is still the basis of our own,
Though ours in tomes be wrapped
And labeled "statutes" and "decrees,"
"Decisions," "judgments"—words like these—
To which the years adapt. 

May laws of man for man be fair
And so applied that all may share
The right of balanced scales.
May we, the guards of justice, show
No man's above and none's below
The law . . . And it prevails.

Beyond our shores may others see
The kind of law that liberty
Allows our land today.
May we who now appeal to You
Find we're upheld in Your review
This Law Day, U.S.A.

A New Year

The years have blotted once again
Another drop of time
And left the record made by men
With all its good and grime
Indelible upon the past
Where all who wish may see
What time in time allows to last
For all eternity.

Another drop—of blood and ink—
Is ours in which to try
For better deeds and thoughts to think
Before it, too, is dry.
'Tis well that these divisions come
To every land and age,
Transferring their sub-total sum
Upon a fresh, new page.

No, Indeed

How they twittered and they tweeted
And they fluttered in the nest—
Two who'd recently completed
Time beneath a warming breast,
Burst from eggs to feathered creatures
Still too small to try their wings,
But with all the built-in features
Nature gives to living things.

I am sure their father brought them
Worms identical in size.
I am sure their mother taught them
That to share is good and wise,
And I'm sure one lost a dinner
While his parents got dessert,
And the one who was the winner
Has a conscience to convert.

From the way their mother acted
As she listened to them scrap,
I could tell she was distracted
And her patience 'bout to snap.
Such a sorry situation
Needs no rendering in words
'Cept to add the explanation
It's not "strictly for the birds."

Nothing to It

A juicy cold, an aching head
Had me retreated to my bed.
My misery was clear.
My husband, sympathetic soul,
Said, taking my accustomed role,
"There's nothing to it, dear."

He rolled his sleeves to warm the soup
And stirred it with a loop-the-loop.
Its splashing I could hear.
Envisioning my stove a mess,
I grimaced to hear him confess,
"There's nothing to it, dear."

He ran the sweeper through the hall.
Right down the middle—that was all.
I raised me up to leer,
And listened to my stand-in say,
"Just let me do it my own way.
There's nothing to it, dear."

That I am grateful, you must see,
But one big problem worries me.
I've come to rather fear
That all the work I daily do
From him draws this conclusion too:
"There's nothing to it, dear."

October

October is coins
on the poplar tree
That purchase rare beauty
for you and me.
It's grapes from the vine
on their way to wine.
It's apples all ready
for pants to shine.

October is color
where'er you look
That rivals a kiddie-
used crayon book.
It's plump, ruddy pumpkins
content to grace
Their fate as a pie
or a funny face.

October is leaves
for our shuffling feet.
It's cool, cleansing rain
with a drowsy beat.
It's chestnuts a-popping
their prickly vests
To bare for the squirrels
their smooth brown chests.

October is hills
with a smoky haze.
It's cornstalks like
wigwams of former days.
And I have a theory:
October's sent
To calm those who ask
where the summer went.

Of Thee I Sing

America, my land of birth,
I sing of your intrinsic worth
To all the nations of the earth.

No invitation was like yours:
An open welcome to these shores
And to their most abundant stores.

They came—the restless and the meek,
Pursuing what all people seek:
To freely worship—freely speak.

They found in you the chance to do;
The hope life's granted to the few,
The nobler way, the brighter view.

They had to work. They had to fight.
They took what they perceived as right
To fire with faith and mold to might.

On pledge of fortunes and of lives
Your liberty and honor thrives
And dedicated zeal survives.

America, of Thee I sing.
My loyalty to you I bring.
My gift is such a little thing.

Old Glory

I'm just a bit of bunting dyed
In stripes of red and white.
My corner holds a field of blue
With stars to give it light.
Though winds may pull and tear at me
And sun my colors fade,
My spirit will remain as strong
As when I first was made.

My hist'ry is the hist'ry of
The land o'er which I fly.
Its freedom, pride and power are
The things I signify.
I've been to all the battles that
My country's men have fought.
I've dwelt in all the school rooms where
The youngsters have been taught.

I watch you stand as I go by
With hat upon your heart.
You see in me a nation great
Of which you are a part.
Unfurled and floating on the breeze
In red and white and blue
Your faith in home and fellow men
Is passing in review.

Ooooooh! Doctor!

His office walls may show in frames
Diplomas by the score.
It may be clear he has degrees
From here to Singapore,
But when I have a stomachache,
The man I want to see
Will have to give beside the pills
A lot of sympathy.

In his profession he may be
The one considered best.
With all the newest medicines
He may be well abreast;
But when there's something wrong inside
That makes my stomach ache,
I want the man who seems to feel
That something big's at stake.

Equipment that his office holds
May be the latest thing.
He may have instruments to test
All body functioning,
But he will fail in the advice
He tries to make me take
Unless he says that mine's the most
Important stomachache.

Out of the Question

Why must a man act the brave pioneer
Blazing a trail in a lost hemisphere,
Sailing like Hudson to harbors unknown,
So independent and so on his own;
Driving his car where he thinks it should go,
Staunchly refusing to ask so he'd know?

Never conceding he has any fears
'Bout where he's headed 'til trouble appears,
Then he grows stubborn, as stubborn can be . . .
He'll work this out. Just be patient and see.
Nothing upsets him unless "we" suggest
Asking directions might really be best.

That is the insult that crushes his pride!
Where is the faith of his once trusting bride?
How would this country have ever been made
Minus the men who explored unafraid!
(Maybe their wives could have hastened the task.
They'd have found gas stations where they could ask!)

The Part in His Hair

Folks look at Bob's picture
and say it is fine.
They praise the photographer
for the design.
They say the expression
is keen and alert.
They even remark on
the cut of his shirt.

His eyes are a-sparkle,
a smile warms his cheek,
And Bob, from his picture,
seems ready to speak;
But still something's wrong
in the way that they stare.
They've never seen Bob
with a part in his hair.

Photographers strive
for the natural way.
They want folks to look
as they look every day,
But oft they are met
with some fond mother's try
To make her small lad
and perfection comply.

She dreams of a boy
who is neatly portrayed.
This boy she can have
when his picture is made.
So Bob with his portrait
please do not compare.
Just let me enjoy
that nice part in his hair.

The Pastor's Call

He sees us on Sunday the way we'd choose,
Bedecked in our finest, we grace our pews.
We sing and we pray, and we hear him out—
The pastor who speaks of the word devout.
But oh, what a shock, what a blow must fall
On him when he comes to the house to call.

He pushes the button. The doorbell rings.
And then there's a clatter and rush of things,
As we, from the fold of the parlor drape,
Behold who it is, and there's no escape—
No place 'neath the carpet for us to crawl.
The pastor has come to the house to call.

Of course, we were scrubbing the kitchen floor.
Our hair is in curlers, and, what is more,
Those cherubs we take to the Sunday School
Are breaking the chairs and the Golden Rule,
As one would suspect from the way they squall,
Not tempered a bit by the pastor's call.

Oh, why can't this shepherd with thoughts sublime
Select for his visit a better time?
Just why would the Lord want His man to see
A flustered, dishevelled, embarrassed me?
Can't someone please fashion a crystal ball
To caution poor sheep of the pastor's call?

Our Patriotic Prayer

Dear Lord:

On this, our nation's natal day,
We lift our thoughts to You and pray
A prayer of gratitude—
A prayer of thanks for mighty men
Who builded her with gun and pen
And fearless fortitude.

Our prayer is also one of hope
That there will rise within her scope
A means to show the world
Just why we thrill to hear her name,
To know her great historic fame
And see her flag unfurled.

On this, our nation's day of days,
We make this, too, a prayer of praise
To You who made each hill,
Each river, plain, and fertile field
So rich with deep and surface yield.
We praise Your gracious will.

In this, our patriotic prayer,
We ask You for the strength to bear
Whatever trials we must—
The strength that comes from being right,
The strength from which comes mortal might—
The faith—"In God We Trust."

Amen

Peggy's Baptism

We arrived a trifle early,
As they asked that we should do,
And were sent into the study
'Til the pastor gave the cue
For the parents there assembled
To parade in single file
And present before the altar
Their wee babes in Christian style.

Those were very anxious moments . . .
Much like waiting in the wings.
As with any first appearance,
It was fraught with many things.
All the little ones were polished.
In their finest they were dressed.
Not a facial cloud could gather
Lest a mother was distressed.

Most the fathers never noticed
That their heir was gaining weight
'Til they held the little squirmer
While they tried to look sedate.
Fancy ribbons, ties and ruffles
Were expanded to the full,
What a glorious temptation
For the tot to yank and pull!

Up above the anxious mothers
And the daddies ill-at-ease,
Far beyond the church's steeple
Was a Power this must please,
For He saw the pride of parents
As to Him they gave their prayer.
(And I'm sure He wasn't troubled
'Cause the curl left Peggy's hair.)

The Perfect Employer

"I broke a dish at Grandma's,"
He hastened home to say.
His tone revealed the mishap
Had almost wrecked the day.
We asked him how it happened.
His words were sadly lipped,
"Well, I was wiping dishes
And, golly, that one slipped!"

But then, as though reaction
To solace was delayed,
He started in relating
A virtual parade
Of dishes Grandma told him
That she had cracked or chipped—
A list to ease a conscience
That hurt because one slipped.

The while he talked we noted
His fingers clutched a dime.
He said for helping Grandma
She'd paid him for his time.
Oh, son, don't judge life's business
By this so gainful trip!
In truth it's only grandmas
Who pay for things that slip.

Peter and Simon

When Christ found the son of Jonas
Casting nets into the sea,
He approached this man called "Simon,"
And He said, "Come, follow Me!
I will change your name to 'Peter'
For a 'rock' is what I need
If my church have firm foundation,
If my work on earth succeed."

Peter followed well the Master
'Til his weaknesses were tried.
Turning "Simon" with disaster,
Thrice Lord Jesus he denied.
Then remorse and firm conviction
Made him shed the weakling's sheath;
So the world as well as Jesus
Saw the "Peter" underneath.

We who have no sight like Jesus
To foretell what men will do
And misjudge our fellow creatures
Should accept this fact as true:
Every "Peter" has a "Simon"—
Has a weakness men may mock.
Every "Simon" has a "Peter"—
Has a side that's like a rock.

Pie in the Sky

I watched a honking phalanx fly,
Much like a wedge of wild goose pie
Escaping 'cross the autumn sky.

One lagged behind the others some,
By later start or "different drum,"
As though it were an errant crumb.

Oh, you with scientific pride,
So apt the pow'r of God to hide,
Just try to be a goose's guide!

A Pilgrim Heart

We journey life,
A pilgrim band,
Enduring strife
To reach a land
Where promise lies
fulfilled.
We seek to find
A Plymouth Rock,
A coast inclined
To let us dock
And toward our precepts
build.

The sea so rough
Defies our bark,
But faith enough
Provides the spark
To guide us toward
the shore—
To row and sail
Until we see
A dream prevail
Whate'er it be:
A purpose to
explore.

The cruel course
May wilt the weak,
But still the force
Of "go and seek"
Will starch a while
their souls.

A pilgrim heart
 All mortals need
 If they would start—
 Much less succeed—
 In life's allotted
 roles.

Proof Positive

The house is a disheveled mess—
 A shambles of itself—no less.
 The papers lie beside his chair.
 The ashtray overflows his lair.
 The dishes didn't do themselves.
 Nor were they done by fairy elves.
 The carpet went without its sweep,
 And unwashed clothes are in a heap.
 Dust lying on all things the same
 Invites a finger-written name.
 He oft expresses some dismay
 At what it is I do all day.
 Well, here it is at setting sun.
 Yes, here it is—and it's not done.

The Recital

It's over now. It can be told.
Our little daughter, five years old,
Has made her grand debut.
Oh, you who've danced your way to fame,
Move over now and hail the name
Of her, our threat to you.

The middle fairy in the row
Who really pointed down a toe
So it would dent the floor,
The one who curtsied back and forth
To southward when the rest went north
Was she whom we adore.

Perhaps, you saw the center clown,
The one who did her bending down
While others stood erect.
'Twould take far more than Russia's powers
To regiment that girl of ours
As one could well detect.

We hardly knew that others danced,
We sat so awed and so entranced—
So helpless to assist.
The other parents, much like stone,
Just seemed to sit and watch their own,
And look at what they missed!

Rock a Spell

Unto a memory I've clung—
A scene I've liked a lot.
'Twas years ago when I was young
And summer days were hot.
My grandma's porch held many chairs—
A squeaking swing as well,
And there she'd call us from our cares,
"Come up and rock a spell."

"Come up"—because it was steps high
Above the path below.
It oversaw the folks walk by
From whom she sought to know
How Sonny's measles had progressed
Or take a gift of jell
From one who answered her behest,
"Come up and rock a spell."

Life knew a slower, softer pace.
My grandma took the time
To see her neighbors face to face
From birth unto their prime.
She wished them well. She was sincere,
As any one could tell
Who heard her welcome as they'd near,
"Come up and rock a spell."

Rolling Clouds

Oh, rolling clouds, roll on, I pray,
Until you've rolled my days away.
Above this portion where I dwell
I look at you, and I can tell
What's meted out for man on earth—
What makes his wisdom and his worth.

You roll in grandeur, fleecy white,
When all is sunshine, warm and bright.
You roll in anger, dark and dire,
And loose to earth those streaks of fire
That speak of wrongs and wrathful mien
We worldly creatures oft have seen.

In you I read life's parts and whole,
That you must look at as you roll
And upward call the glance of those
Who read the portents you propose.
Oh, rolling clouds, roll on, I pray,
Until you've rolled my days away.

Silent Soliloquies


I watched the bushes yellow
To look like living gold.
None chatted with its fellow,
Yet what a tale they told.
I saw the leaves a-budding,
And in each verdant shoot
The liquid life was flooding
So eloquently mute.

The sun above was shining.
It uttered not a sound.
A vine was toward it twining
In silence from the ground.
A cloud like cotton candy
In quiet seemed to sigh,
"Come drift today. It's dandy
Against the azure sky."

I strained my ears to listen
But didn't hear a word.
I wish some power might christen
What then to me occurred:
No voice is really needed
To speak in praise of God.
As though my thought was heeded,
I saw a daisy nod.

Silent Sounds

Sometimes I think that I can hear
Nostalgic sounds of yesteryear:
The porch swing with its rhythmic squeak,
The attic floorboard's cringing creak,
The carpet beater's whack and whine,
Wind flapping sheets out on the line,
The old Victrola's drowsy drawl . . .
A most effective windup call.

And if I listen I detect
Among the sounds I recollect:
The handle on the farmyard pump 
Each time it took a shaft-ward bump;
The hooves of horses on parade,
The tunes calliopes once played,
The snore of saws that slept through wood,
The chug of trains that "knew they could."

The trolleys clanging down the track
Of bygone days can take me back
To strains that came from car and man
When cranking was the starting plan.
Old voices echo in my head
Like masters' music, memory read.
For sounds that make the past so rich,
I'm glad that I have perfect pitch.

A Small Boy's Prayer

His fingers are folded before his face.
He's settled upon his knees.
He's clad for the journey that will embrace
A cruise on the Snoozeland seas:
A sailor reluctant to start the trip,
A mariner wanting reprieve,
A tar who's been sent to his scudding ship
And told that he has to leave.

Before he embarks there's a nightly prayer
His Captain is asked to hear.
Its rigging is rickety here and there,
At least to a mother's ear.
The short-winded syllables slip and slide
In rapidly running chant
While he, at the brink of the vessel's side,
Applies for a holy grant.

The Lord is requested to bless his folks.
It's part of his hasty plea.
He mentions them all to the steady strokes
Of swaying from knee to knee.
His thinking may roam to a daytime whim.
His mother he thus annoys
Until she recalls that he speaks to Him
Who best understands small boys.

Sometimes

Dear Lord, sometimes it's hard
to know
Why others seem to hurt us so—
Especially those held dear.
The things they say, the things
they do,
Sometimes can cut us through and through
Just like a jagged spear.

Sometimes an inconsiderate
quip
Takes on proportions of a whip
When heedlessly it's flung.
Sometimes a word of praise
unsaid
Can strike a good achievement dead—
So mighty is the tongue.

Sometimes my feelings get so
thin—
Worn so, I fear, by looking in
Where trifles grow to crimes.
It's then, dear Lord, make me
reflect
On how I injure or neglect
My dearest ones—sometimes.

My Stand-In

Dispatched to bed because a cold
Attacked my head in manner bold,
I listened to the day unfold.

The clicking latch, that certain pace,
And four small feet in rapid race
Announced my stand-in had my place.

Yes, Grandma had arrived to aid,
To play the games they wanted played,
To read and sing the while she stayed.

She sewed an eye on Peggy's bear,
Made up an ear for Bobby's mare,
And mended trucks in disrepair.

And then she bore with martyr's poise
Mid deaf'ning shrieks and giggling noise
A "permanent" with tinker toys.

Somehow she managed to survive
The brunt of all this childish drive
And called it "fun"! Land sakes alive!

And when at last she drove away,
They looked at me as if to say,
"Can't you be sick another day?"

The Stopping Question

When he whistled and held up his
big broad hand,
In a second I'd stopped at his
plain command.
Then the folks who were bound for
the east and west
Gathered speed as he beckoned
them, two abreast.
I began to reflect, while he made
me stop,
On the girl who is wed to
a traffic cop.

I admire the lass who can say,
"I do"
To that uniformed man in his
navy blue;
For there's something about him
that makes me quake,
Just as though I were guilty
of some mistake.
To his eye, I'm a car he can
start or stop,
But I wonder 'bout her who
has wed the cop.

Is she fearful of making a turn
that's wrong?
Does she jump, when he speaks,
like the highway throng?
Is she fluttered each time that
he looks her way
Cause she doesn't know whether
to go or stay?

Does her heart pick up beats
'til it's 'bout to pop
When she looks at the cap of
her traffic cop?

Does the badge he is wearing
give her a fright
When she's held in the arms of
the law at night?
Though he scares every woman
who drives a car
When she watches him signal
her from afar,
He's prob'ly as sweet as a lollipop
To the girl who is wed
to the traffic cop!

Sunbeams

There's nothing like a Sunday School—
That weekly hour in class,
When stories of the Golden Rule
Are taught to lad and lass!
When little ones all scrubbed and brushed
Arrive to praise the Lord.
Although their sound may not be hushed,
They reach their best accord.

There's nothing like a little face
Intent on teacher's words,
And she explains about God's grace,
His love of beasts and birds,
His making pretty posies grow
And our big world to whirl.
There's nothing like that face aglow
On little boy or girl.

There's nothing like a little voice
That sings in accents high,
And does so heartily rejoice
In truths we can't deny.
Of such the fount of faith is fed
With lovelight to its brim.
'Tis little wonder Jesus said
To let them come to Him.

Sunday Prayer

Dear Father, hear our Sunday prayer.
Receive the thanks we speak
For blessings that You let us share
Throughout the recent week.

Today we pause to humbly ask
For strength and daily bread,
For will to do whatever task
Besets the week ahead.

Today in faith we seek Your aid,
The comfort of Your word,
Your rod to guide us unafraid,
Your pardon if we've erred.

Today we wish for motives pure,
For peace, for love, for trust,
For courage while our hearts endure
Whatever grief they must.

Today the while we pray to know
What You would have us do,
Remind us, God, to let it show
Today belongs to You.

Sunny Side Up


The sun got up
and began to yawn,
Then washed his face
in the dew-drenched dawn
And stretched his fingers
across the sky
To coax the birds
to wake up and fly.

And they in turn
from the nested trees
Begin to chirp
'til they roused the bees
Who buzzed the tulips
to open up
For breakfast time
at the Pollen Cup.

Another day
had begun to break.
Of course, I wasn't
myself awake;
But what I've told
is the truth to tell
'Cause that's how God
cracks a new day's shell.

Sweetheart Season


We have come to sweetheart season.
There is romance in the air.
It is based upon the reason
That two lovers seek to share
Life with all its stormy weather—
Life with all the joy it brings—
Life that they will start together
With ribbons, rice, and rings.

Of all seasons it's most pleasant.
Showers make excitement grow; 
For each raindrop is a present
With a rainbow afterglow.
Friendship wraps its warm affection
'Round a host of pretty things
Glad to bask in the reflection
Of ribbons, rice, and rings.

Rings to circle youthful fingers;
Rice to wish the fullest life;
Ribbons tied to hold what lingers
All their days as man and wife.
It is always sweetheart season
When the heart within one sings
And cherishes the reason
For ribbons, rice, and rings.

Three on a Tree


"Why," chirped the robin,
to small avail,
"Why is this human,
complete with pail,
Attacking my cherry tree?
Why is she gathering
rich red fruit,
Robbing these branches
when all this loot
Belongs to my wife and me?"

"That's where you're wrong,"
said the big brown squirrel,
Flicking his tail
to a balanced curl,
"This harvest is truly mine.
You're but a poacher
a thief of sorts 
Like unto those
in police reports.
Move over and let me dine."

Meanwhile I picked
on my purposed path,
Though I could sense
furred and feathered wrath.
The tree was in my domain . . .
Or could it be—
I began to think—
Rights of possession
in pen and ink
Mere man gives to man in vain.


Tea Totaler

I had a real good time the day
The sixth grade had a tea.
The afternoon was made quite gay
For mothers such as me.
There was a play presented first—
A splendid work of art,
And I was not by worry cursed.
Mine didn't have a part.

I had a real good time, indeed.
Piano tunes were next.
I listened as one wholly freed
From what had others vexed.
No furrows lined my anxious brow. 
No frown had cuts its crease.
You'd like to know the "why" and "how"?
Mine didn't play a piece.

Mine didn't dance. Mine didn't sing.
Mine made no grave mistake.
Mine didn't do a gol' darn thing
Except down punch and cake . . .
Or so it might appear to those
Whose pangs and pride were plain,
But Mine gave me, I must disclose,
An hour free from strain.

Thanksgiving Prayer

To You who gives the soil and seed,
But lets us harvest what we need
For life and growth and health,
We offer thanks, a small return 
For all that You have let us earn
In worldly works and wealth.


To You who placed the pilgrims' feet
Upon this land where free men meet,
In humbleness we kneel.
That's but the least that we can do
For precepts tried and ever true
You had Your Son reveal.

To You, our mortal faith and hope
When burdens seem beyond our scope,
We pause with bended head.
We thank You for our fam'ly ties,
For earthly fortunes that we prize
And for our daily bread.

Forgive us, Father, when we fail
And let our weaknesses prevail.
Our hearts are in Your care.
We love You, Father, very well.
It's this we really want to tell
In our Thanksgiving prayer.

Thinking Time

When a turtle tucks his top piece
'Neath the shelter of his shell
It is called an indication
That his outlook isn't well:
That he's worried or he's fearful;
That he's hiding from a crime;
But I think that even turtles
Have a need for thinking time.

Though a fellow's pace is gaited
At a crawling sort of speed. 
He has problems other people
Never truly know or heed.
He must keep his head extended
While he makes his upward climb;
But there have to be some moments
He can use for thinking time.

He needs time to leave the friction
And the trials he daily meets—
To withdraw into his being
Like a cleric who retreats
To the cloister of his order
For a refuge that's sublime.
Men and turtles need a period
They can use for thinking time.

Thirty Pieces

Oh, what did thirty pieces buy?
They bought the cry of
"Crucify,"

The profit from a kiss.
They bought a trial that mocked
its name.
They bought each false and
fear-filled claim
And Pilate's cowardice.

Those bits of silver bought
the nails,
The cross, the crown, the
human wails,
The vinegar and gall.
They bought release for one
who killed
So blood untainted might
be spilled . .
They bought it all.

Those little coins bought
death for two,
Our Lord and him who was
untrue.
They were a princely price.
They bought for a repenting
thief
Whose dying gasp was of
belief,
A life in paradise.

They bought the veil
that darkened day.
They bought the empty
tomb's dismay
And Christianity.

Oh, what are thirty pieces worth?
The shame and glory of the earth
For all eternity.

A Time for Faith

A time for faith—
 A time for prayer—
A time for knowing
 God is where
There is an earnest call—
Is given with
 abundant grace
Unto His beings
 who must face
The fate allotted all.

Horizons halt
 our will to see
Why certain trials
 and troubles be—
Why winter withers hope,
But there is ours—
 without a doubt—
A strength we cannot
 do without,
A faith to help us cope.

It isn't knowledge—
 true and tried—
That mortal tests
 have satisfied.
It isn't for the few.
It is a humble,
 holy thing:
This time for faith,
 this trust in spring,
That guides what we must do.

Tipnology

There is something 'bout a woman
 When she's taken out to eat,
Though she's had a splendid dinner
 And admits it was a treat,
Still you'll note a bit of quiver
 Right around her lower lip
When her husband from his pocket
 Is a-fishing for the tip.

Though she doesn't look too closely,
 'Cause it's not the thing to do,
She will wiggle forward slightly
 To obtain a better view
Of the cash and coin he's leaving
 'Neath his napkin or his plate,
And it almost spoils her relish
 For the victuals that she ate.

In her mind she's turning over
 What that money would have bought,
And he knows without a signal
 That the atmosphere is fraught
With a troubled sort of tenseness
 Born of care he cannot save,
For she's asking with her silence
 Just how much it was he gave.


Now, I can't explain the reason,
 Though I'd like to set you right.
It would be a grave injustice
 If we'd call the lady "tight,"
But each time she goes out dining
 To this worry she succumbs.
Could it be that when she's serving,
 All he ever leaves are crumbs?

Toyland Tom

I'm a musical kitty
In Toyland's display,
And I head the committee
At close of the day
To provide entertainment
On counter and shelf
And to teach the attainment
Of selling oneself.

Now it isn't so simple.
Each toy has to try.
Dainty dolls use a dimple
Or wink of an eye;
While the train has to choo-choo,
The top has to spin,
And the cry babies boo-hoo
In order to win.

Through the night we're in training,
Each one on his skill,
And it's my job maintaining
The pace of the drill.
Of their ratings in class
I'm supposed to keep track,
For a failure can't pass
Into Santa's big pack.

'Round my neck is a label.
It's why I'm so bold.
It is proof I am able.
It reads I am "Sold."
So I sit, pink and yummy,
With tail tightly curled 
While the box in my tummy
Plays "Joy to the World."

Tricks or Treats

Strange are the things that will
happen tonight;
Earth will be hushed as though
waiting in fright,
Goblins and witches will ride in
the air . . .
Woe be to all if the cupboard is bare!

Bands of marauders with plunder
in mind
Neighboring homes will invade as
they find
Candy and chewing gum, cookies
and nuts . . .
Heed their commandments without
any "buts"!

Masked little faces will come
to the door.
Knowledge of voices, of course,
we'll ignore.
Each will be clutching a bag in
his fist,
Shouting the warning to all who
resist.

Porches we'll light for the pirates'
attack.
Joy we will see as we put in each
sack
Pennies or lollipops, apples or
cake.
This is the night for the tummies
to ache!

The Twenty-Fourth Psalm

"The earth is the Lord's and
the fullness thereof,"
Sang the psalmist in worship
of old;
And the pilgrims used this
as their paeon of love
On Thanksgiving so we
have been told.

They were thankful for life.
They were thankful for food.
They were thankful for finding
this sod.
Here their people could be
Where the worship was free;
For all this they were
thankful to God.

On this day when we pause—
When we gather to feast,
When we're counting our
labor's rewards,
It is well we recall
What's oft lost with the
least:
That the earth and its gifts
are the Lord's.

The Under-Pillow Fairy

If you doubt there is inflation—
That the dollar's light and airy,
Let me make this explanation
'Bout the Under-Pillow Fairy.
Many years she's been residing
In a castle on the heath,
Not composed of stone or siding,
But of tiny, pearly, teeth.

Since nearby there is a dragon
Who destroys her dental dome,
This wee fairy takes her wagon
And at night explores each home
Where a little Bill or Mary
Has been taught the timeless truth
That the Under-Pillow Fairy
Will pay money for a tooth.

I remember well those mornings
In the years of yestertime
When I heeded all the warnings,
And I found a shiny dime.
To our son with loose incisor,
I explained this recompense.
With these words he left me wiser:
"She left Johnny fifty cents!"

Unemployed

"Oh, the lady whom you mention
Isn't working any more!"
That's a thought I hear quite often,
And it's one I can't ignore,
For the words so apt to follow
Show the speaker is misled
'Cause he'll then go on explaining
That the lady now is wed.

True, she may have left an office
Or a store or a career
In the routine land of business
For a homey atmosphere,
But for him to draw a picture
That she's now without a job
Is enough to make a housewife
Have a good old-fashioned sob.

Every day she does the cooking,
And she washes, sews, and mends.
Then she dusts and runs the sweeper
Over dirt that never ends.
In between she raises children,
And, perhaps, a garden too.
I am speaking of the lady
Who has nothing now to do.

She is just a wife and mother.
There's no time clock she can punch.
And I doubt it most sincerely
That she takes an hour for lunch,
Or will pause to check her lipstick
While she's scrubbing on a pan.
She's the girl who gave up working
When she caught herself a man.

Victory of Hate

Good Friday was a triumph day
For priest and pompous state.
Good Friday was in every way
The victory of Hate.
Hate held the council trying Him.
Hate harkened unto fear
And gave the verdict harsh and grim
That all the world would hear.

Hate lifted up the sour sponge.
Hate pounded in the nails.
Hate chose the side its knife would plunge.
Neglecting no details,
Hate made the crown complete with thorns
And printed up the sign
To mark the "King" it chose to scorn—
The King who was divine.

Hate saw Him die, and Hate rejoiced,
For Hate felt safe at last.
The holy doctrines Jesus voiced
Were done—were dead—were past.
Yes, this was Hate's historic date—
The victory of sin;
But three short days revealed to Hate
That it can never win.

The Waiting

Very much of man's life
falls in periods between—
In the lull of the hope
of what cannot be seen,
Or conversely, it's spent
in the doldrums of dread
So oppressive the worst
lies in not what's ahead
But in the waiting.

When he's young there's no bound
to the peaks he can scale.
There's no fear in his mind
that a project may fail.
He has only to plan
and to work and to dream
For some glorious goal
at the end of the gleam . . .
Of the waiting.

But the pinnacle touched
or the base of the pit
Are as seconds to years
if, indeed, they are hit;
So if life should be lived,
then 'twould surely behoove
All of us to resolve
that we daily improve
The waiting.

Wedding Prayer



Before Your altar, God we pray
A special prayer this wedding day.
An earthly home has just begun
By making two forever one.

As it is builded board by board,
Give it a heart and soul, Oh Lord—
A heart for love, a soul for right,
And both for warmth and lasting light.

Make it a fortress 'gainst all strife,
A haven from the hurts of life,
A temple sacred to this pair
Because their hopes and dreams are there.

Oh, give it windows made of love,
Reflected from Your own above
And mirrored in the eyes of both,
Through which to watch its daily growth.

Let beauty climb its garden wall,
And joy in patches big and small
Spring up to make one grand bouquet
Begun by this, their wedding day.

A Wedding Thank-You

We thank You for each other, Lord,
On this, our wedding day—
The moment when two hearts record
The blending of their way.

We thank You for the gift of love
Which You so sweetly sent.
We'll cherish it all else above,
Just as we're sure You meant.

We thank You, too, for those who've cared
About our happiness—
With whom this joy of ours is shared—
This union that You bless.

We thank You for the hopes and dreams
That we'll pursue in life
And for the double strength that streams
From being man and wife.

We thank You as our vows are said—
Our duties duly stressed—
For being present as we're wed—
Our most important Guest.

We Tried

We bought them a desk
and a good desk chair
'Cause posture to us
is a grave affair,
And the kids should be molded
until they're grown,
Especially when
they are both your own;
So that's what we got them
to learn life's lore.
But where did they sit?
Well, 'twas on the floor.

We bought them a lamp
at a goodly price
'Cause eyes aren't a subject
for sacrifice.
We studied the ads
so's to get the best
And learned if the beam
should be east or west.
We really worked hard
so we'd get it right,
And where did they read?
In the TV light.

We fixed up a room
where it all was still,
Where quiet and peace
let them work at will.
"In there they won't hear us,"
we both avowed.

They couldn't. Their radio
was too loud.
The targets were fixed,
but our aim was wide.
Yet no one could say
that we hadn't tried.

What Is Christmas?

What is Christmas? It's a story
Of a baby's humble birth.
It's a tale of wondrous glory
For all men who walk the earth.
It's the dawn of better living
And a strong and helpful creed
Based on love and freely giving
Of oneself for those who need.

What is Christmas? It is singing
Of old carols ever new.
It is church bells gayly ringing
Out their message sweet and true.
It is mistletoe and holly
And a yule log's burning glow.
It is Santa, big and jolly,
Whom our children grow to know.

What is Christmas? It's a spirit
At its peak but once a year.
One can see it, feel it, hear it
Long before it's even here.
It is well that it's repeated—
That it's ours by yearly plan.
In this way the world is treated
To the very best in man.

What Happened?

"What happened?" they wondered
at dawn that day.
The stone they had dreaded
was rolled away.
They trembled with fear.

"I'll tell you what happened,"
the angel replied,
"The One you are seeking—
the One you thought died—
No longer is here.

"What happened? He's risen!
He's not with the dead.
He lives as example
of all that He said.
What more do you need?

Go forth to the others
and tell them the news;
Then all of you spread it
until it imbues
The world with His creed."

What happened? Eleven
were asked to receive
As fact what had happened,
though hard to believe
In mere mortal scope:

That life everlasting
is granted by God
To those who are faithful
their days on this sod.
What happened . . . was Hope.

Where?

Where's the fellow once so gallant,
Once so sweet and debonair,
That each time they sat to dinner
He would help her with her chair?
Oh, he hasn't crossed the country,
Hasn't even crossed the state.
He's just there across the table
With his eyes upon his plate.

Where's the one who thought her fragile
When he took her for a ride—
Used to guide her by the elbow—
Hold the car door open wide?
Has he driven off without her?
No, he's waiting, but, alas—
With a show of great impatience
He sits pedalling the gas.

Where's he gone, the man with manners
Even Galahad might note—
He who'd never let his lady
Struggle solo with her coat?
Where's he gone while she attacks it
With a somewhat muffled groan?
Not so far—but he is busy.
He is putting on his own.

Where's he gone? I'll have to tell you
That he slyly slipped away
In a manner all unnoticed
With the girl of yesterday—
With the girl who used to praise him
Every time he came in sight
And who never let him fathom
That he wasn't always right.

Where He Walks


We walk in faith.
He walks in sight.
His veil is set aside.
We walk in dark.
He walks in light
Where heaven's open wide.

We walk in trust
With weights of pain,
With worries and regrets.
He walks in peace
Upon a plain
Where glory never sets.

We walk in grief.
Our loss is great.
Our tears so freely flow.
He walks in joy
Beyond the gate
Where all is good to know.

We must walk on
Where duty charts
A path yet unexplored
While he awaits
Our loving hearts,
He walks beside our Lord.

Winter Garden

Though the wind outside is raw and cold
And the ground is pretty hard,
Still the hope for spring's eternal here,
To misquote a famous bard. 

For my Bill has clipped the magazines
Of the coupons that they show,
Which will bring him catalogues for free
On the things he'd like to grow.

As he looks across our snowy yard,
There's a garden in his mind
That is yielding onions, peas and corn,
And some fruits of every kind.

In his thoughts he's planted beets and beans,
And he's picking apples, too,
From the trees that stay as dwarfs in size
Over there in his mental view.

But the thing that really worries me
Is the weary harvest chore . .
For the only space we have to plant
Is about six feet by four.

A Winter Walk

Unwinking stars that cannot sleep
For what they seem to see,
With eyes that neither laugh nor weep,
Are staring down at me . . .
At me who's made to feel so small
By their relentless gaze,
And yet I doubt they care at all
'Bout what their light surveys.

The bones of trees hold back the moon.
My breath's free form in air.
The crusted snow cracks out a tune
To steps it fails to bear.
All's crisp and cold the while I stride
'Neath callous stars above;
But I can feel no chill inside.
I walk with one I love.

The Wonder

Dear God,
You watch the sparrow
lest it fall,
And push the seedling
'til it's tall,
And cap the mountains
white.
You ripple waters
with a breeze,
Or firm them to a
solid freeze
And turn on day and
night.

The seasons yearly
come and go
With all the traits
that make them so
Because Your finger
bends;
The guiding stars have
You as guide,
The moon calls You
to move the tide.
On You it all
depends.

So broad the burden of
Your cares
In helping nations
with affairs
Of land and air and
sea;

The wonder—greatest
of them all—
Is that I know, if I
but call,
You still have time
for me.

A Young Mother's Prayer

Dear God,
This prayer is very old.
You hear it every day
From lips of mothers everywhere
In all the tongues that pray:

Behold these children 'round my knee
Whose steps do falter still,
Unhurt by fear or sorrow yet,
Untouched by hatred's chill.

How well You know what's on my mind
And what I'm going to ask.
It's just that You will guide my hand
In my momentous task.

I feel so very awed within
At what I have to do
To help them be the kind of folk
Who, too, will turn to You.

A Poet's Petition

Give me a thought, God,
give me a thought—
One that is worthy to think.
Rhyme shouldn't run
on the river of Nought.
If there embarked, it
should sink.

Let my poor craft ride
its way to the sea,
Borne by a stream with
a view—
One that embraces the
beauties there be,
One that is mindful
of You.

Lend it the meter
You put in the waves.
Lend it the rhythm of
song.
Grant it the channel of
cheer that it craves
As it is carried along.

Give it a cargo of
value to bear—
Truths that are hard to
resist.
Then, if You think it
is ready to share,
Give it a passenger
list.